

Message Text

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ACTION TRSE-00

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 DEAE-00 SNM-02 AID-20 IGA-02 IO-14

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8479

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 2556

PASS INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS DIVISION, CUSTOMS SERVICE, FOR KEENAN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR BM

SUBJ: CUSTOMS ASSISTANCE - BURMA

REF: STATE 194829

1. WELCOME VISIT BY KEENAN ON OR ABOUT OCTOBER 15. OCTOBER 29-30 DATES WOULD BE INCONVENIENT BECAUSE OF GUB-UNFDAC CONFERENCES SCHEDULED FOR SAME TIME.

2. REFTEL ARRIVED SHORTLY AFTER PRELIMINARY INQUIRY BY OFFICIAL OF MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND FINANCE UNDER WHICH CUSTOMS FALLS IN GUB

ORGANIZATION) ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF USG NARCOTICS ASSISTANCE TO BURMA CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT. HE MENTIONED MOTOR BOATS AS SPECIFIC POSSIBILITY. EMBOFF SAID USG COULD CONSIDER ADDITIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL ASSISTANCE ONLY IF WE CAN BE SURE THERE WOULD BE NO OVERLAP WITH NARCOTICS CONTROL ASSISTANCE PACKAGE TO BE SUBMITTED TO UNFDAC. MOPF OFFICIAL SAID NO OVERLAP EXISTED.

3. WHEN SAME OFFICIAL WAS QUERIED ABOUT A POSSIBLE VISIT BY KEENAN, HE REITERATED (PROBABLY ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIS MINISTER) INTEREST IN ASSISTANCE, AND VOLUNTEERED THAT CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT IS SEEKING FOREIGN TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES. LATTER REMARK WELCOME THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY SURPRISING; OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT OUR OFFERS OF TRAINING (BY DEA) TO BURMESE POLICE HAVE BEEN IGNORED
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MORE OUT OF BUREAUCRATIC INERTIA THAN CONSCIOUS CHOICE, AND WE HAD

SOME INDICATIONS THAT LOWER-LEVEL POLICE OFFICIALS FAVORED ACCEPTANCE OF MOST RECENT ONE.

4. IN VIEW OF GUB INQUIRY ABOUT POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE TO CUSTOMS, BELIEVE KEENAN VISIT WOULD PROVIDE EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO BEGIN PROCESS OF ASCERTAINING WHAT IS WANTED AND ASSESSING WHETHER IT WOULD BE IN OUR INTEREST TO HELP. WOULD URGE, THEREFORE, THAT KEENAN BE PREPARED TO LISTEN TO GUB EXPLANATION OF NEEDS AND TO DESCRIBE CUSTOMS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN OTHER COUNTRIES, WITHOUT OF COURSE MAKING ANY COMMITMENT HERE.

5. OUR PRELIMINARY REACTION IS THAT A REQUEST FOR AID TO CUSTOMS, IF REASONABLE IN SCOPE, SHOULD AT LEAST BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED. AS DEPT AWARE, WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT ANY SIGNIFICANT QUANTITIES OF NARCOTICS ARE MOVING OUT OF BURMA BY SEAPORTS OR THE TENASSERIM COAST (THE ONLY AREAS WHERE CUSTOMS CAN REASONABLY BE EXPECTED TO CONTRIBUTE TO INTERDICTION). AT SAME TIME, THIS IS AN OBVIOUS ALTERNATIVE ROUTE FOR TRAFFICKERS SEEKING TO AVOID THE ATTENTIONS OF BURMA ARMY IN THE SHAN STATE, AND WE HAVE ALREADY NOTED TREND IN CARAVAN MOVEMENT FARTHER SOUTH, INTO KAYAH AND EVEN NORTHERN KAREN STATE, BEFORE CROSSING THAI BORDER. SMALLER CARAVANS MAY WELL MOVE INTO TENASSERIM, AND ESPECIALLY WITH THE TENDENCY TOWARD PRODUCING MORE MORPHINE BASE AND HEROIN IN NORTHERN SHAN STATE (TO REDUCE BULK HAVING TO BE TRANSPORTED), MOVEMENT TO SEAPORTS IS A LIKELY FUTURE DEVELOPMENT. GROWING NUMBER OF BURMESE SEAMEN EMPLOYED BY FOREIGN (E.G., SINGAPORE AND HONG KONG BASED) SHIPPING LINES IS ALSO A POTENTIAL TARGET FOR TRAFFICKERS.

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